

**KIDS AS COMMODITIES: GLOBALIZATION AND CANADIAN  
SCHOOLS**

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A Project  
Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies  
of the University of Lethbridge  
in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree

**MASTER OF EDUCATION**

**FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

**LETHBRIDGE, ALBERTA**

August 2003

## Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge Dr. David Townsend, Dr. Brian Titley, and Pam Adams for your encouragement, feedback, and continual support. Your commitment to excellence and the Masters' program is commendable. You have my sincere appreciation and respect.

Thank you to all of the members of the Calgary cohort for your support and encouragement through this journey. You have made all of the work enjoyable and discussions thought provoking.

Thank you as well to Maureen Patton, for your insight into teaching, for endless pedagogical conversations, and your willingness to read all I have written.

To my mother and father, Harry and Betty Fansher, thanks for your continual support and love. Thanks for instilling in me the love of learning and books.

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## Abstract

Globalization: The meaning of the word conjures up images of both violent demonstrations and peaceful sit-ins, with many in the population wondering, “What’s the fuss?” Globalization is also a term that has different meanings for different organizations some human rights, some environmental protection, some anti-corporate, some anti-establishment. As well, globalization suggests the extension of trade agreements, and the modernization of the global economy according to free market principles. Public education, in Canada as well as various other parts of the world, has found itself in a precarious and threatened position with the current emphasis on free market policy. Education is being systematically underfunded, creating a crisis within the classroom and, potentially, for democracy itself. This historical comparative analysis discusses the conservative modernization movement and its intentions for public education and the alternative views of a strong publicly funded education system in Canada. The crisis in the public education system need not exist. Alternative views offer choice, and accountability, the same ideals that the modern conservative movement is striving for. Creating a balance between the two views is the notion of cooperative theory. The current adversarial positions are neither necessary nor inevitable.

## Chapter One: The Nature of the Problem

### Background

Globalization is a term that has pervaded current literature and current events. This however, is not necessarily a current phenomenon. Since the beginning of civilization, humans have followed food sources and subsequently each other in their quest for the basics of life. They soon found themselves in contact with other groups with which they could trade goods and services. Trading patterns were developed and expanded. This practice, the process of globalization, has been evolving for centuries.

So why is there the current uproar regarding globalization? Why have there been violent demonstrations in Seattle, Genoa, Quebec City and others? The anti-globalization movement has been vocal and sometimes violent, opposing the growing wave of conservative modernization sentiment. The term globalization has a number of different meanings for a number of different groups. To some, it is the expansion of a particular set of political ideals in developing nations. To others, it is the term that denotes the degradation of the environment, abuses of human rights and other social issues. To others, it is the economic conservative movement that has embraced many of the international trade organizations and governments alike. One of the difficulties in tackling the globalization topic is that the term globalization itself has a variety of meanings and has become the catch phrase for all of the opposition groups no matter what it is they are opposing.

So where and how does public education fit into globalization? Public education, since the 1990's has been subject to modern conservative reforms with an emphasis on

standards, accountability, choice, and financial cutbacks. A crisis has been created through the continuous underfunding and undervaluing of public education programs. This crisis is due to a shift in thought regarding all government expenditures, including public education. Not only has this occurred in Alberta, but elsewhere on the globe. This shift in thought is the rise of the conservative modernization movement including neoliberal, neoconservative, authoritarian populist and the new managerial and professional middle class (Apple, 2001, p. 11). All of these groups have worked in concert to lobby governments to support their positions. And they have been very successful, as many governments and international organizations throughout the planet are embracing this ideology and subsequently, creating economic and political policies that have changed the very nature of public education.

### Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study is to increase awareness among educators regarding the effect that globalization is having and could have on public education. It will create a proactive preparatory foundation of knowledge of globalization as it relates to public education. This study will compare the leading advocates' positions for the conservative modernization movement and alternative viewpoints. The organizations to be compared are: The Conference Board of Canada, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, and the Fraser Institute for their *right* position and the Canadian Teachers Federation, Canadian Association of University Teachers and Education International for their *alternative* position. It will then suggest a model for moderating the effects of globalization on public education.

### Research Questions

- What is globalization?
- What is public education?
- What does the conservative modernization movement wish to achieve?
- What is the *alternative* position for public education?
- If the *right* were to succeed, what would public education look like?
- What are the implications of globalization on public education?
- Is there a moderating position that can achieve the modernization of public education but maintain the equity and democratic features of the current system?

### Significance of the Study

A study of the implications of globalization in public education in Canada is important for a variety of reasons. First, the topic of globalization or conservative modernization is a rather new phenomenon in the evolution of human society. Globalization has come to mean many things to many people and often we do not consider that larger economic and political forces have an enormous impact on what happens in our classrooms. This study will help to broaden our understanding of the potential impact on public education and give a moderating position to the zeal of the conservative modernizing forces.

### Description of Methodology

This study will be an historical comparative analysis of the positions of the proponents of globalization to those with alternative viewpoints as they relate to public education. “In historical research, the review of the related literature and the study procedures are part of the same process” (Gay et al, 2003, p. 221). As Neuman (1997)

would imply, “[historical comparative] research is an intensive examination of a limited number of cases in which social meaning and context are critical” (p. 388). Documents from the various organizations will be analyzed and their positions toward public education policy will be extrapolated. Historical comparative research “combines a sensitivity to specific historical or cultural contexts with theoretical generalizations” (Neuman, 1997, p. 388). The context for this study will be specifically in Canada and the examples taken from the province of Alberta. As Babbie (1989) proposes, historical comparative research involves “hermeneutics ... as the art, science or skill of interpretation” (p. 322).

Both the proponents and alternative positions to globalization will be summarized and recommendations will be presented that moderate each of the extremes.

### Definition of Terms

Each of the following definitions is necessary in determining an explanation of the overall paradigm.

- Public- “of, pertaining to, or affecting the people as a whole or the community, state, or nation” (Stein, 1967, p. 1162).
- Education- “the act or process of imparting or acquiring general knowledge, developing the powers of reason and judgement, and generally preparing oneself or others intellectually for mature life” (Stein, 1967, p. 454).
- Public education- “refers to all schools that are totally funded (at least in theory) by public dollars and that are open to all students” (MacKay, 1999, p. 64).
- Left- “political groups representing the radical or liberal wing of socio-political reform parties” (Baldwin et al, 1997, p. 18).

- Right- “political groups representing the conservative or reactionary wing of socio-political parties” (Baldwin et al, 1997, p. 18).
- Economic globalization- “... is the intensification of a global market operating across and among a system of national labour markets through international competition” (Astiz et al, 2002, p. 67).
- Institutional globalization- “... is characterized by convergence toward a uniform model of polity and of rationalization” (Astiz et. al, 2002, p. 67).
- Reform- “programs of educational change that are government-directed and initiated on an overtly political analysis (that is, one driven by the political apparatus of government rather than by educators or bureaucrats, and justified on the basis of the need for a very substantial break from current practice” (Levin, 1999, p. 2).
- Ideology- “indicates the frameworks of thought which are used to explain, figure out, make sense of or give meaning to the social and political world” (Levin, 1999, p. 4).
- Private schools- “one that operates outside the provincially funded and governed school system” (Goddard, 2000, p. 2).
- Implication- “suggest as a likely consequence” (Oxford Dictionary, 1993, p. 454).
- Neoliberalism- “[Neoliberals] are deeply committed to markets and to freedom as “individual choice”” (Apple, 2001, p. 11).
- Neoconservatism- Neoconservative ideology stems from “a vision of an Edenistic past and wants a return to discipline and traditional knowledge” (Apple, 2001, p. 11).

- Conservative modernization- “This rightward turn [in Western society] has been the result of the successful struggle by the right to form a broad based alliance” (Apple, 2001, p. 37).

### Assumptions/ Limitations behind the Study

#### Ontological assumption.

Reality and history are subjective; each participant in an event or situation will have a specific perspective from which their reality or perception operates. An excellent example of this is the meeting of Ralph Klein, the Premier of Alberta, and Larry Booi, the President of the Alberta Teachers’ Association on March 8, 2002 during the teacher strike. Each of their interpretations regarding the arbitration process and what was to be included and excluded from the negotiations demonstrate very different perspectives.

Ralph Klein claims that he and Booi agreed that only salary would be part of the binding arbitration process. Larry Booi contended that more was discussed than just salaries. Peter Elzinga, a Klein advisor, created the minutes of the meeting that reinforced Klein’s position. Booi however, contended that those minutes and the comments were incorrect. One must ask, who is telling the truth? Or more likely, who is more believable?

As well, each stakeholder; student, teacher, administrator, superintendent, trustee, business person, citizen, taxpayer, and government officials, all have something to be gained or lost from globalization and its’ impact on public education. Because it is highly subjective and relies highly on individual ideology, the perceptions may be tainted and invoke an emotional response, negative or positive, to globalization.

### Epistemological assumption.

This research is value laden and biased. I am a high school teacher within the public school system and therefore, have a personal stake in the outcomes of the reforms. I, also, do not share the growing political ideology of the conservative modernization philosophy. I do not think that a pure market economic ideology is prudent or viable for public education or for all facets of society. I think that it is necessary for some government involvement in business to regulate industry so that it competes by equitable means. We only have to look at the examples of the Enron scandal and the Microsoft monopoly to understand this potential. I believe that business' main goal is profit, and any means necessary to attain that goal is not only necessary but also laudable in business. I also believe that it is not possible to impose a business model onto education. Simply, our goals are completely contrary. "Human dignity, equity, justice and caring were [and are] to serve as both ends and means in our political, economic and social relations" (Beane, 1998, p. 8). Our children are not a commodity to be bought or sold.

### Rhetorical assumption.

The research is evolutionary, as the events and policy changes occur almost daily. It is an historical comparative analysis of the events and ideologies, from a variety of perspectives, which led to the current state of crisis within the public education system in Canada. "The language of qualitative studies [becomes] personal, informal, and based on definitions that evolved during a study" (Creswell, 1994, p. 7).

### Methodological assumption.

The currency and dynamics of the topic of globalization, offers challenges to the researcher. Often reforms are adopted quite quickly and the face of public education can

change dramatically. It is the intention of this paper to study globalization and its impact on public education to the present. Predictions for the future are tenable at best given the current political climate and the growing opposition to full-scale market economics.

### Delimitations

This study's focus will address the current zeal for conservative modernization in the public education system. It will address the growing pressure on the system both economically and ideologically through the elements of choice, accountability, and standards. I recognize that throughout many jurisdictions in Canada, including Alberta, Ontario, New Brunswick, Quebec, and British Columbia, public education has been under constant devaluation through financial constraints and propaganda. As well, throughout the world, starting in Great Britain, under former Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, in the United States, under former President Ronald Reagan, and in New Zealand, with former finance minister, Roger Douglas, the market economic ideology has been seen as the *only* economic choice. This ideology blames public services for the lack of productivity and deficit budgets. All of these separate jurisdictions have had some effect on the situation in Alberta and indeed Canada.

## Chapter Two: Proponents of Globalization

### Introduction

Throughout the 1990s and into the new millennium, a global ideological shift has taken place. The adoption of neoconservative policy can be found not only in leading industrialized nations of the world but also in agencies such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Through the implementation of trade agreements such as the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the General Agreement on Trade and Service (GATS) and the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), governments and these economic organizations have created the potential for the implementation of market practice into public education. This *new right* ideology suggests that the purpose of education is the “[preparation] of students for the job market” (Marchak, 1991, p. 102). The new right would suggest that education should be either financed privately, advocating consumer choice, or developed into a system where the government determines the job market and establishes funding accordingly (Marchak, 1991, p. 102). “In either event, the new right literature advocates a reduction in public spending on education” (Marchak, 1991, p. 102).

The neoconservative ideology, which guides the “conservative alliance” (Apple, 2001, p. 53), has infiltrated the psyche of many policy makers and taxpayers alike, offering a seemingly viable solution to the problems of high individual taxes, the rising cost of social programs, and the so-called crisis in public education.

We are told to “free” our schools by placing them into the competitive market, restore “our” traditional common culture and stress discipline and character, return God to

our classrooms to guide all our conduct inside and outside the school, and tighten central control through more rigorous and tough-minded standards and tests (Apple, 2001, p. 5).

“This rightward turn has been the result of the successful struggle by the right to form a broad-based alliance” (Apple, 2001, p. 37). This conservative alliance finds a variety of differing values among its members but has managed to find an often-precarious balance to promote the privatization of public services. “Its aim in educational and social policy is... conservative modernization” (Apple, 2001, p. 37). In Canada, there are a number of powerful right wing groups, which have had, and will continue to have, an important influence on the way public policy is determined. Some of these groups include the Conference Board of Canada, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation and the Fraser Institute. This chapter will address the following questions:

- Do these organizations have a formal policy regarding public education?
- Have these groups attempted to undermine public education or do they support the idea of a publicly funded education system?
- If they reject the notion of a publicly funded education system, with what would they replace it and what is their justification for doing so?
- Lastly, can the market ideology work for education and would it create a better society if it were adopted?

To begin, it is necessary to define the conservative alliance, to describe where it began and to explain how it has evolved into such a powerful lobby force throughout the

world. The conservative alliance is made up of four distinct groups that are pushing for the privatization of public services. These groups are categorized into neoconservative, neoliberal, authoritarian populists, and the managerial and professional new middle class.

Fundamentalist groups such as fundamentalist Christians attempt to seize the public schools to institute a religious agenda; fiscal conservatives want the schools to become like businesses, with the bottom line dictating infrastructural demands and the dictates of the market driving the curriculum; social conservatives... see the schools as a site of struggle for the true universal values that can be transmitted through a common core curriculum (Saltman, 2000, p. 79).

Each of these groups has different reasons for adopting the *right* ideology but each is committed to the privatization of public services. “Privatization can be understood as a transfer of responsibility for the delivery of educational services from a local, state, or federal government to a private corporation” (Saltman, 2000, p. xxii). Much of the literature seems to adopt either the neoliberal or neoconservative terminology when referring to this conservative alliance. The literature uses the terms interchangeably and it is often difficult to ascertain the author’s intent.

### Neoconservatism

Neoconservative ideology stems from “a vision of an Edenistic past and wants a return to discipline and traditional knowledge” (Apple, 2001, p. 11). We see evidence of the neoconservative ideology in the movement for curricular standards, standardized

testing, and a return to the three R's, patriotism, character education, and a revisiting of Western tradition.

Underlying some of the neoconservative thrust in education and in social policy in general is not only the call for "return". Behind it as well... is the fear of the Other. This is expressed in its support for national curriculum, attacks on bilingualism and multiculturalism, and its insistent call for raising standards (Apple, 2001, p. 47).

Many of the charter schools both in Alberta and in the United States would espouse this type of ideology. These charter schools are set up to follow conservative values with school uniforms, a focus on methods and pedagogy from a more traditional past, and the reinforcement of discipline and structure. Charter school and home school legislation has provided the opportunity for these neoconservative groups to attain public funding for schools that would otherwise be denied such support.

School reform is increasingly dominated by conservative discourse surrounding *standards, excellence, and accountability*. "Since the more flexible parts of the standards have proven to be too expensive to actually implement and have generated considerable conservative backlash, standards talk ultimately functions to give more rhetorical weight to the neoconservative movement to enhance central control over "official knowledge" and to "raise the bar" for achievement" (Apple, 2001, p. 51). Saltman (2000) states, "... excellence in education does not refer to excellence in services for students, excellence in working conditions for teachers, or an excellence ideal of teaching for democratic change. *Excellence* refers to an instrumentalized notion of teaching deriving

from the history of scientific management, a heavy reliance on standards, and a curriculum oblivious to the knowledge of different groups” (p. 15). As evidence of this, the Fraser Institute publishes, in local newspapers, a ranking of schools based on the achievement of individual schools on the Provincial Achievement Tests and Diploma Exams. This very public comparison of schools’ results adds to the rhetoric of the effectiveness of schools in their achievement when compared to the provincial average and to other schools. It does not take into consideration the demographic and socio-economic status of the students in the schools taking the tests or the proven invalidity of the tests themselves. These standardized tests are lauded as the only true measure of standards, excellence, and accountability.

It is not only in the control of legitimate knowledge that neoconservatives wish to extend their influence. It is in also in the growth of the regulatory state as it refers to teachers. “There has been a steady growing change from “licensed autonomy” to “regulated autonomy” as teachers’ work is more highly standardized, rationalized and policed... Teachers are now subject to much greater scrutiny in terms of process and outcomes” (Apple, 2001, p. 51). This leads to the deskilling of teachers, the intensification of their work and the loss of autonomy and respect. It shows that there is a clear distrust of teachers and that distrust has manifested itself in attacks on teachers’ competence and especially on the teachers’ unions. “The mistrust of teachers, the concern over a supposed loss of cultural control, and the sense of dangerous “pollution” are among the many cultural and social fears that drive neoconservative policies” (Apple, 2001, p. 52).

## Neoliberalism

The neoliberal ideology offers another set of values that are included within the conservative alliance. This ideology is directly related to the privatization and the market economic discourse and is the one specific defining political/economic paradigm of the most recent times. “[Neoliberals] are deeply committed to markets and to freedom as ‘individual choice’” (Apple, 2001, p. 11). This is a very powerful force with the underlying value that public is bad and private is good. “The triumph of the market language imposes a singular vision of the future and a singular set of values – namely, faith in capitalism” (Saltman, 2000, p. ix). Public institutions are seen as economic black holes into which money is poured without any accountability or efficiency. “For neoliberals, one form of rationality is more powerful than any other – economic rationality. Efficiency and the “ethic” of cost-benefit analysis are the dominant norms” (Apple, 2001, p. 38).

The idea of market economic discourse started early in Western history with the theories of John Stuart Mill, John Locke and, most predominantly, Adam Smith. In this theory, the market would act with the same certainty as the natural laws that the Scientific Revolution would prove. “According to [Smith’s] theories every person tries to satisfy, in an individual manner, their own necessities and simultaneously is moved, by an invisible hand, towards contributing to the welfare of society” (Batasuna, 2002, p. 1). The most rational indicators, according to Smith, to efficiently channel economic resources were economic freedom and the freedom of the laws of supply and demand in fixing prices in the markets. One outgrowth of adherence to this ideology was a fierce opposition to State intervention. It was intended that the State limit itself to policing work and the defense of

public order. Liberalism has reigned since Smith; however, Karl Marx and John Maynard Keynes mounted successful attempts in the twentieth century to significantly moderate and alter Smith's original intent. In fact, it could be said that much of the twentieth century saw the world half Marxist and the other half Keynesian.

During the oil crisis of the 1970s and the fall in the income yield capacities of investments, many investors saw a loss of fortunes, a rise in prices, and deficits in the accounts of developing countries.

It can be presumed that one of the principal factors of the crisis was the electronic revolution and its enormous capacity to increase productivity; this is especially so in OCDE countries and areas within their influence. The economic formulas applied in the expansive phase weren't any use any more, given that stimulating demand, through State activity, couldn't recover the profit rate of capital. On the other hand, the ever-increasing inflation rate undermined the whole system. To emerge from this crisis and economic stagnation, capital needed another policy (Batasuna, 2003, p. 2).

So, at the start of the eighties, when the United States still hadn't recovered from both political and economic setbacks, President Ronald Reagan saw a need to return to liberal principles in order to increase economic capacity and reduce State intervention. This trend, though, was not just centred in the United States. Many other nations and eventually global trade organizations would also adopt this method. Along with Ronald

Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, in Great Britain, also adopted the neoliberal ideas of Friedrich von Hayek and Milton Friedman.

At Cambridge University during World War Two, two economists formulated and debated economic theory while acting as air raid wardens for the university during the Battle of Britain. Friedrich von Hayek, who had been given asylum, and John Maynard Keynes were intellectual rivals at Cambridge. It was certainly a battle of ideas. Keynes, successful already with the implementation of *The New Deal* by Franklin D. Roosevelt in the United States during the Great Depression, thought that a fully free market would go to excess and von Hayek, forever in opposition to Keynes, thought that the market would take care of itself. It would have been interesting to hear these two debating on the rooftops of Cambridge, watching for overhead planes. (Yergin & Stanislaw, 2002, p. xiv) Within fifty years, however, Keynesian economics would fall out of favour and von Hayek would find the support that had eluded him for most of his life.

Friedrich von Hayek was a strong proponent of traditional liberalism. Working in Vienna prior to World War Two, von Hayek saw the devastation of the reparation payments of the first World War, first hand. He witnessed the hyperinflation that wiped out much of the savings of the middle class. Von Hayek believed that the economy must fight against inflation, that markets work and governments don't, and that the markets need to be free from government meddling. He acknowledged that prices actually determine what a system is worth. (Yergin & Stanislaw, 2002, p.xiv) In the 1950s von Hayek moved to the Chicago School of Economics where he would find in *the Chicago boys* a welcome acceptance of his market ideology. Milton Friedman, from the Chicago School of Economics, also espoused the market ideology with an emphasis on the free

market, individualism, and freedom. Members of this exclusive group all worried that socialism was running rampant throughout the world and, although they admired the socialist academics for their vision, they believed that democracy was impossible without a free economy. In 1974, von Hayek was awarded a Nobel Prize. Later, he began to see the fruition of his ideas with the economic policies of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. By 1976, Milton Friedman had won a Nobel Prize as well, and he and the Chicago boys were finding popularity through their ideas in a variety of nations in the world including Chile, Bolivia and other South and Central American countries along with the United States and Great Britain.

Friedman's position on education is much of what is seen today with the proposal for public-private partnerships in Alberta.

In Friedman's vision the government still levies school taxes and pays for education; however, the government no longer owns and runs the schools. The schools themselves would be privately owned and run. In addition to the government financing privatization, the government would impose some set of rules on schools to ensure a level of quality. Schools would be licensed by the state the way that individuals are licensed to fish or drive. (Saltman, 2000, p. xxii)

Eventually, by the turn of the millennium, the world was without opposition to the free market economics. The Soviet Union had collapsed and even China began adopting more market economic policies with the unification of China and Hong Kong in 1997.

Von Hayek and Friedman's model of economic discourse had become, and has remained the globe's reality.

Neoliberals are by far the most powerful group in the conservative alliance supporting conservative modernization. For neoliberals, not only are public schools failing our children as future workers, but also, like all public institutions, they are depleting the finances of the country. There is the belief that "schools are built for teachers and bureaucrats, not consumers" (Apple, 2001, p. 38). The notion of the consumer is essential. "For neoliberals, the world in essence is a vast supermarket. Consumer choice is the guarantor of democracy" (Apple, 2001, p. 39). The idea of choice has been pervasive in the discussions of the neoliberal right. Neoliberals have, quite successfully, taken democracy as a political concept, and transformed it into an economic one. Choice involves a variety of ideas in respect to the education industry. It may mean choice in the school the child attends, including charter schools, the voucher system or private schools; choice in the curriculum a child receives; choice in the values that are being taught; or choice in corporate involvement in the school. It may also mean the choice of a skills education for employment or a more liberal education. "Underlying neoliberal policies in education and their social policies in general is a faith in the essential fairness and justice of the markets" (Apple, 2001, p. 43). In general, common sense has shifted to the belief that democracy and consumer choice are synonymous. Neoliberals have been successful in shifting the belief in what constitutes common sense and have used very powerful market metaphors in justifying their arguments. These metaphors include "efficiency, competition, the failure of public education, equity, accountability, democracy and individual freedom of choice" (Saltman, 2000, p. 3-4).

Premier Ralph Klein, throughout his restructuring efforts in Alberta, has consistently shifted the paradigm of common sense through the use of metaphors, marketing, and sales, convincing people that this ideology shift is indeed common sense. With the use of these metaphors, the ease in which the neoconservative and neoliberal ideologies can work together to promote the conservative agenda is apparent.

### Authoritarian Populism

Neoconservatives have forged a creative coalition with neoliberals, a coalition that – in concert with other groups – is effectively changing the landscape on which policies are argued. Even with the growing influence of neoliberal and neoconservative policies, the conservative modernization movement would be less successful if it had not brought authoritarian, populist, religious fundamentalist and evangelical organizations under the umbrella of the conservative alliance.

The authoritarian populists are generally “religious fundamentalists and conservative evangelicals who want a return to (their) God in all of our institutions” (Apple, 2001, p. 11). Until recently, such parents could send their children to school knowing that what was being taught and reinforced in the schools were Christian values, Christian teaching, Christian discipline and Christian indoctrination. They now view public education as a very dangerous place, where godlessness is rampant, where there is no morality, no support for the traditional family structure, and a loss of biblical connections. “If the existing public school system cannot be made to support ... Christian beliefs, then neoliberal school choice programs such as vouchers – or failing that, charter schools – provide the keys for changing what children will learn and how they will be taught it” (Apple, 2001, p. 143). There are a variety of charter and private schools in

Alberta that espouse these Christian values. As well, the growing trend toward home schooling offers many parents a viable solution to the “godlessness” of the public school. Again, this is an area that receives public funding and is supported by taxpayers’ dollars through legislation in Alberta.

The power of these groups is visible in a variety of ways. “The agenda includes, but goes beyond issues of gender, sexuality and the family. It extends as well to a much larger array of questions about what is ‘legitimate’ knowledge in the schools. And in this larger arena of concern about the entire body of school knowledge, conservative activists have had no small measure of success in pressuring textbook publishers to change what they include and in altering important aspects of state educational policy on teaching, curriculum and evaluation” (Apple, 2001, p. 55).

One of the most famous examples of the strength of this group is the Scopes Trial in Tennessee in 1925. The very argument of scientific evolution versus creationist theory was presented publicly with emotion and voracity. Some school boards have mandated that evolution theory cannot be taught in the schools. Although Scopes finally won, throughout the twentieth century fundamental Christians continued to wage battles in the courts and in the minds, and continue to be enough of a presence to actively voice their concerns over curriculum materials through censorship by pressuring publishing houses. Ironically in the face of opposition, whether legal or moral, members of the Christian coalition have perceived themselves as being persecuted and oppressed. For many modern Christians, with fundamentalist beliefs, any such conflicts are seen as a battle between those with grace and those without.

The fundamentalists and evangelicals also have a firm belief in their own moral superiority that extends far beyond the sphere of the private life. “For conservative evangelicals, religion is not a private matter. It is necessary to extend its voice and reach in the public debates over cultural, political, economic, and bodily practices and policies” (Apple, 2001, p. 133). They believe that individual morality and honesty are the answers to economic problems and they have an obligation or even a *burden* of activism. With this kind of zeal, it is no wonder that this group wields some significant power as a wealthy lobby group.

John Maynard Keynes once suggested, “capitalism is ‘absolutely irreligious’. The love of money, and the formulation of capital, had led to a steady decay of religion” (Apple, 2001, p. 24). Yet while admitting that capitalism can be culturally destructive, particular forms of Protestantism, particularly Calvinism, emphasize hard work, frugality and self-control, all important elements of capitalist economies. “Capitalism is ‘God’s economy.’ Economic freedom and market economies in education and larger society are given biblical warrant” (Apple, 2001, p. 25). So, it is all right to participate in the market economy as long as it is in a moral and godly way. Accumulation of wealth is acceptable as long as a certain portion is returned to the Church or to charity.

It is this odd combination of an antipluralist set of beliefs (we are the chosen ones, the ones with the truth) and a belief that in the United States everyone’s values should be responded to equally (we are an oppressed minority) that makes the case of authoritarian populists such a complex story. (Apple, 2001, p. 151)

### Managerial and Professional New Middle Class

The managerial and professional middle class is an increasingly powerful group within this conservative alliance. “This is a fraction of the professional new middle class that gains its own mobility within the state and within an economy based on the use of technical expertise” (Apple, 2001, p. 57). These are the people with managerial backgrounds, and efficiency skills who provide the professional support for accountability, measurement, and assessment that is the required by the neoconservative and neoliberal proponents. They have the technical expertise to implement neoconservative and neoliberal policies. They may actually be more moderate in many aspects of their lives than those traditional supporters of conservative policy; however, “their own mobility depends on the expansion of both such expertise and the professional ideologies of control, measurement, and efficiency that accompany it” (Apple, 2001, p. 58).

It is important to recognize that the neoliberal and neoconservative emphasis is not solely responsible for conservative modernization. The managerial and professional middle class “fully believes that [conservative] control is warranted and good” (Apple, 2001, p. 58). They believe that conservative control is necessary to maintain the status of their own professionalism, as well as enhancing the chances that “the children of the professional and managerial middle class will have less competition from other children” (Apple, 2001, p. 58). This realignment of society would “enhance the value of the credentials that the new middle class is more likely to accumulate, given the stock of cultural capital it already possesses” (Apple, 2001, p. 58).

Typically this group is worried about its future and the future mobility of its children in an uncertain economic world. “They may be drawn more overtly to parts of the conservative alliance’s positions, especially those coming from the neoconservative elements that stress greater attention to traditional high status content, greater attention to testing and a greater emphasis on schooling as a stratifying mechanism” (Apple, 2001, p. 59). Some of the charter schools find their support from this group, especially those schools that stress academic achievement in traditional subjects and teaching practice.

The managerial and professional middle class, is the group, which has the least direct connection to the conservative alliance. They would, given the right circumstances, support the idea of a publicly funded education system as long as there are the stricter controls that they so desire.

Overall, all of these groups within the *new right* have their own reasons for supporting *conservative modernization*, including public education. The neoconservatives seek a system that would support a traditional view of history and the family. The neoliberals have an unwavering faith in market ideology. The authoritarian populists fear the godlessness of the world and the managerial and professional middle class seek opportunities for themselves and their children and wish to maintain their competitive advantage. What, then, are some of the organizations that fall under this umbrella within Canada, and what are their positions regarding public education?

The movement for conservative modernization is a global phenomenon. Part of the reason that the movement has such strength is the involvement of international organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank that support this ideology, as well as the growing trend toward international treaties and trade

agreements. Many nations simply do not have a choice with regard to adopting this type of policy. For example, in 1994, the Nicaraguan government had to freeze social spending as directed by the International Monetary Fund (Barbieri, 2001, p. 11). In Canada, however, the choice has been made to support the conservative alliance ideology. Federally, the Liberal government, and the previous Progressive Conservative government, have supported international trade agreements as well as budget cutting in a variety of different departments all under the guise of being fiscally responsible and globally competitive. Education is predominantly a provincial responsibility but is supported through transfer payments from the federal government. In this arena, budgets have been cut as well. Provincially, Canada has a number of governments that are wholly conservative in nature and support conservative modernization. Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia have led the charge in developing *new right* ideologies in their provinces. The conservative modernization movement not only enjoys support from provincial and federal governments, but some of the most powerful and wealthy lobby groups continue to push for legislative changes in privatizing public education. These include the Conference Board of Canada, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation and, the most notable and vocal, the Fraser Institute.

#### Conference Board of Canada

The Conference Board of Canada is an independent not-for-profit applied research organization providing information to customers from both the private and public sectors. Research includes a variety of topics from economic trends, education and learning, health economics, innovation, international trade agreements and many others

(Conference Board of Canada, 2003). The Conference Board of Canada would be squarely placed under the neoliberal umbrella of conservative modernization.

The Conference Board of Canada believes the purpose of public education is to “prepare Canadians for today’s knowledge-based economy” (Conference Board of Canada, 2003). There is a distinct focus on education providing employability skills for the competitive job market. The Board sees this as necessary for business to maintain a highly skilled workforce to remain globally competitive.

The Conference Board of Canada espouses an increased partnership between corporations and public education. It suggests the corporations have a “social responsibility” (Conference Board of Canada, 2003) to support education and, through the increase of business partnerships, can play an integral role in the way education policy, and possibly, curriculum is developed. The Conference Board of Canada would support the notion of public-private partnerships (P3s) in the capital financing of schools.

Kitagawa (1998) in his article, *Ontario’s Secondary School and Apprenticeship Reforms* underscores the idea of school – business partnerships with the objective of helping youth to make the transition from school to work to adulthood (p. 2). He suggests that in Ontario the government already supports school-to-work transitions through a variety of different programs and outlines some of the reforms to secondary schools and apprenticeship programs that are being developed. The Conference Board of Canada wholly supports these reforms including streaming of students as early as Grade 7, increasing the number of compulsory credits placing emphasis on math, language, and science, the expansion of work experience, cooperative education and youth apprenticeship programs, increased private involvement, and the placement of students

with teacher-advisors, as well as guidance counsellors, to make sure the student is making the correct choice for his or her future (Conference Board of Canada, 2003). As well, the apprenticeship training is to be expanded and tax incentives are to be given to businesses to support the program and the formation of industry-education partnerships (Kitagawa, 1998, p. 3-4).

The focus is mainly on employability and job skills, and throughout the article there is no mention of a liberal education or the skill of learning how to learn. Kitagawa (1998) points to statistics where “work bound students (who make up approximately 50% of all students who enter Grade 9) will be prepared for the workplace during their secondary school years” (p. 2). There is no mention, however, from where these statistics are taken and for how they are actually accounted.

The Conference Board recognizes, however, that there are some significant barriers to the achievement of a seamless learning system. “Perhaps the greatest challenge ... lies in overcoming the view that all ‘good’ jobs are built upon formal college or university education” (Kitagawa, 1998, p. 4). He suggests,

The key to overturning that prejudice lies in enhancing skills development in secondary school and increasing the number and scope of business-education partnerships to provide secondary school students and out-of-school youth with programs and opportunities that will prepare them for successful entry into the labour market. (p. 4)

### Canadian Taxpayers Federation

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation (CTF) is a federally incorporated, non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to being a watchdog on government spending and taxation (Canadian Taxpayers Federation, 2003). Its mission statement empowers to CTF “to act as a watchdog on government spending and to inform taxpayers of governments’ impact on their economic well-being; to promote responsible fiscal and democratic reforms, and to advocate the common interest of taxpayers; and to mobilize taxpayers to exercise their democratic responsibilities” (Canadian Taxpayers Federation, 2003). Again, along with the Conference Board of Canada, the CTF promotes the message that the public sector is inefficient and the private sector should be the model for all institutions. Again, too there is a melding of political (democratic) ideas and economic (free market) ones, where each is defined as one and the same and where there is the potential for confusion and misunderstanding. Very few in the Western world would suggest openly that the achievement of a democratic state does not benefit its citizens and yet, if anyone criticizes the conservative modernization ideology, he or she may be seen as undemocratic, even traitorous.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation presented a position essay to the Alberta Commission on Learning on November 15, 2002. In the Commission, various stakeholders were given the opportunity to address the concerns they had surrounding public education and their proposed solution to the crisis. John Carpay (2002), in a news release entitled, *Excellence in education through accountability and choice*, outlines the proposal of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation to the Alberta Commission on Learning.

He suggests beginning, to “reward excellence in teaching with merit pay” (Carpay, 2002, p. 2). There is criticism of the pay grid in education, which does not account for effectiveness or performance. “In Alberta today, a caring, dedicated, hard-working and effective teacher is paid exactly the same as a lazy, unmotivated and incompetent teacher” (Carpay, 2002, p. 2). The Canadian Taxpayers Federation sees this as unfair and “recommends that teachers be paid according to their competence and effectiveness, in addition to seniority and level of education” (Carpay, 2002, p. 2).

One of the ways they suggest to measure this performance is on the standardized achievement tests. They recognize however, that the provincial achievement tests alone are not an effective measure. They suggest using a Value-Added Assessment System that they understand has been used quite effectively in Tennessee since 1992. In this assessment, the students are tested at the beginning of the year and again at the end and the overall increase or decrease in student performance is the basis upon which a teacher’s performance would be evaluated.

Another way they suggest measuring teacher performance is the amount of extracurricular involvement of teachers. “Whether a teacher spends some time, a lot of time, or no time at all on extracurricular activities should influence his or her salary” (Carpay, 2002, p. 2).

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation sees seniority and level of education as the “primary factors which determine teachers’ salaries” (Carpay, 2002, p. 3). What they would wish to see is a teacher’s salary begin at about half of what it is now, based on seniority and level of education. Additional money would be given to teachers who show increases in student performance based on the Value-Added Assessment and involvement

in extracurricular activities. They suggest other criteria for measuring teacher performance could be added in the future.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation, in their second point to the Alberta Commission on Learning, sees an increased role for parents especially with the use of vouchers. "Parents should have the right to choose the school that they believe will be the best suited for their children's needs and to remove their children from a school which fails to meet those needs. Parents (as well as taxpayers who are not parents) deserve a public education system which provides real accountability and real choice" (Carpay, 2002, p. 5). They view the use of vouchers as a way to extend the degree of choice throughout the province. "Each parent should receive a voucher from the Alberta government. That voucher could be used by the parent for any school in Alberta (public, Catholic, charter, private, etc.). An equal per-pupil grant from the Alberta government would go to the school which parents chose for their child" (Carpay, 2002, p. 5).

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation suggests the separation of the teachers' union from the professional body. They understand that

Parents, students teachers, employers, taxpayers and all members of the public would be far better served by a separate professional body whose sole purpose would be to establish high standards for those wishing to enter the teaching profession and to enforce those standards for those wishing to remain in the teaching profession. The existence of a separate professional body, not in conflict with itself by having to be a union at the same time, would enhance

the public credibility and stature of teachers... Therefore, the Alberta Government should immediately amend the *Teaching Profession Act* so as to create a professional body to govern the teaching profession (Carpay, 2002, p. 6).

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation recommends that “school principals should not be required to join the union” (Carpay, 2002, p. 7). They view principals as managers of schools and not necessarily as the educational leaders of a school. They believe that with the above-noted amendment to the *Teaching Profession Act*, “principals could still be required to belong to the professional body – but not the union” (Carpay, 2002, p. 7).

As well, they recommended to the Alberta Commission on Learning that “teachers should not have the right to strike” (Carpay, 2002, p. 8). They see the *Teaching Profession Act* as creating a monopoly on education through the *Alberta Teachers’ Association*, and as long as that continues to be the case, teachers should not have the right to strike.

Finally, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation suggests that “taxes should not be increased” (Carpay, 2002, p. 9). They note that in the 2001-2002 fiscal year, Alberta spent more (per person) on government programs than any other province in Canada. “Rather than raise taxes, the Alberta government should better manage the revenues it already takes from Albertans in taxes” (Carpay, 2002, p. 9). They suggest that with all of the reforms outlined in their proposal, it should possibly cost the taxpayers less rather than more.

### The Fraser Institute

One of the most vocal neoliberal groups in Canada regarding public education and the public sector is the Fraser Institute. “As an independent public policy organization, the Fraser Institute focuses on the role competitive markets play in providing for the economic and social well-being of all Canadians” (The Fraser Institute, 2003). The Fraser Institute is wholly neoliberal in its convictions and receives its funding through individual and corporate donations that are tax deductible. As described earlier, neoliberals believe that free market economics is the only viable system in the global economy. They believe in Adam Smith’s *invisible hand*, and that the only role for government should be to protect individual property rights and personal or collective security. They see public education as a monopoly and suggest that the only alternative to the crisis in education is to create an education market.

An educational market, one in which parents choose their children's schools and schools compete more freely for students, will produce better educational results for more students. Substantial evidence from the United States, Britain, Denmark, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and other parts of Canada, shows that when funding follows children to their parents' choice of school, parental satisfaction, academic achievement, and educational opportunities improve. To put this mounting evidence into practice, in January 2003, The Fraser Institute launched Children First: School Choice Trust, a small pilot program designed to

help Ontario families send their children to the independent elementary school of their choice. (The Fraser Institute, 2003)

The Fraser Institute is involved in an enormous amount of research surrounding public education. Through various publications, the Fraser Institute explores how the public education system can be improved using market incentives involving the examination of school choice, school report cards, teacher tenure, and charter schools. They publish *The Fraser Forum* that offers market solutions to public services including education. One of the issues, funded through the Milton and Rose Friedman Foundation and the Fraser Institute, is entitled *School choice in depth: Learning from success: what Americans can learn from school choice in Canada*. In this issue, they trumpet the virtues of school choice providing equity, socialization, quality and accountability within the education system. Some of the arguments are founded in research but many are misleading. As one example, the author invites the readers to "... consider the evidence from Canada, where 92 percent of the population enjoys a variety of publicly funded school choices" (Robson & Hepburn, 2002, p. 1). There are many claims such as this, along with charts and graphs illustrating their position. Another of the Fraser Forum publications, entitled *Greater returns on our investment in education*, also views education as an industry and a market where there should be a return on investment.

Visiting their website, [www.fraserinstitute.ca/education](http://www.fraserinstitute.ca/education) offers a good overall view of the vast amount of resources and energy the Fraser Institute is expending to make sure the market ideology remains in the forefront of educational discourse on reform. Copies of the *Fraser Forum* can be downloaded, as well as current news releases from

the institute. The *Report on Canadian Education* as well as the ranking of schools in Alberta based on Provincial achievement test results can also be found. The Fraser Institute funds a variety of large research projects that are also available on-line. *The case for school choice*, *Can the market save our schools?* and *Homeschooling: from the extreme to the mainstream*, are all lengthy publications supported by credible authors throughout the world.

In *Can the market save our schools?*, Hepburn (2001) puts together a variety of papers from prominent authors in considering the potential of market-based policies to address the problems facing Canadian education. “It offers the results of systematic research into the effects that other market-based education reforms have had in Canada and around the world where they have been tried and tested, in some cases for years, in others generations” (p. 1). In the first section of the book, the authors suggest that the public’s goals for its education system would be more attainable if schools were encouraged to respond to the demands of parents rather than the bureaucracy. Providing choice for parents is a basic element to these discussions and through the second section of the book, the authors contribute the results of research on a range of market mechanisms, from traditional forms of school choice, to charter schools, vouchers, and choice for the poor in developing countries. *Can the market save our schools?*, provides often compelling arguments for school choice.

### Conclusion

The market view of public education is the predominant discourse in the public realm. Each of the Canadian organizations that has been described above has immense resources and an ability to steer the course of discussion about public education. The

media picks up the information and extend the discussion through television and newspapers to the waiting public. The discussion of the so-called crisis in public education has been marketed quite effectively. It seems that everyone knows what would be best for education but the educators themselves.

This chapter addressed the following questions:

- Do these organizations have a formal policy regarding public education?
- Have they attempted to undermine public education or do they support the idea of a publicly-funded education system?
- If they reject the notion of a publicly-funded education system, with what would they replace it and what is their justification for doing so?
- Lastly, can the market ideology work for education and would it create a better society if it were adopted?

The Conference Board of Canada, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation and the Fraser Institute all have formal policies regarding public education. The Conference Board of Canada is focussed primarily on content in curriculum, providing students with job-related skills and employability. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation and the Fraser Institute have strong views regarding an education market. They both seek to lobby for choice, accountability, standards and excellence and have the means and resources to ensure their voices are heard. Through lobbying governments and public media, both the Canadian Taxpayers Federation and the Fraser Institute, provide often ill-founded statistics and arguments that perpetuate the myth of a crisis in public education. This is not to say that some of their suggestions for reform in education are not necessarily viable. However, the debate about public education should include all of the varying

positions rather than just the ones developed by people and organizations with the resources and power. Could the market ideology work for education? In practical terms, school choice, accountability, standards, excellence, all could be achieved through the marketization of public education but would it not create further divisions within societies, whether socio-economic, political, or social? If there is a fundamental belief in humanistic values, there must be a discourse surrounding public education that provides for the advancement of all in society, rather than just a few.

## Chapter Three: Alternative Views

### Introduction

Since the beginning of the 1990s a shift in economic thought has taken place. Capitalism has found itself in a place where the Cold War competition between capitalism and communist forces is all but over. Rather than see the world turned into a global village with the sounds and senses of community, countries all over the world are slowly turning to the rhythms of the stock exchange, trade agreements, and gated communities. Multinational corporations have stepped into the competition, ruling economies and policies alike, through such instruments as trade organizations. They fight independent business and public institutions for the largest piece of the pie. Smaller independent businesses like the local bookstore or corner grocery store are being bought up, and forced out by multinationals, whose only accountability is to the profit margin and their shareholders. There is no real competition. Chief executive officers are appointed to a position, and often after a few years at one corporation will step aside and just move to another multinational. There is no democratic process, no loyalty, and no community.

So why are there protests and demonstrations against globalization? Is this competition not a natural course for human endeavor? Much of the awareness started throughout university campuses, where many students became preoccupied with “the aggressive corporate sponsorships and retailing on public and cultural life, both globally and locally by university students and social and environmental group leaders” (Klein, 2002, p. xx). It is not clear whether that preoccupation came from ads in cafeterias, common rooms and even washrooms, the exclusive deals that administration was making

corporations. The students were concerned for their standard of education and the encroachment of private business into the public sphere. As well, various social and environmental groups were addressing similar concerns.

This is the face of globalization. Concerns surrounding corporate intrusion in public spaces, human rights, labour conditions, environmental protection, liberty and democracy found voices in activists and ordinary citizens alike. This opposition to the growing conservative modernization movement has found that public education whether elementary, secondary, post-secondary, and graduate or distance, is threatened as well.

So how does globalization affect public education? The drive for high tech equipment, access to the internet and the latest in video conferencing, along with the chronic under funding of the public school system, has led public schools to accept corporate sponsorship, although reluctantly. There is often very little choice for the administration and educators. Employers want people who are trained in high tech, but the public school system does not have the money to support this ever-changing industry. "In this context, corporate partnerships and sponsorships arrangements have seemed to many public schools, particularly those in the poorer areas, to be the only possible way out of the high tech bind" (Klein, 2002, p.88). As fast food, athletic gear and computer companies step in to fill the gap, they are never satisfied with just tagging the schools with a few logos. They are not opposed to education; in fact, many have an agenda of their own. They would like an English class to write advertisements for their products, or a geography class to search out where their products are made. However, the emphasis for them, is on consumerism rather than learning.

Most public schools and universities try to limit the amount of sponsorship through rules and regulations. However, even with those rules in place, “the fact is that campus expression is often stifled when it comes into contact with a corporate sponsor” (Klein, 2002, p. 96). Corporate sponsors can, in effect, re-engineer the values of the public university. When research at universities is provided sponsorship from corporations, it adds credibility to the corporation and money to the project. But does it add credibility to the university researchers? The contracts that the corporations sign with university administration often are very restrictive. Klein (2002) uses a variety of examples of professor dismissals, when they would not retract the conclusions of their research, and notes, that in many cases the research was forced from publication. There is concern that surrounds the encroachment of corporations in these public spheres. Very few places are untouched, where young people can see that a successful public life, although nostalgic, is possible.

There is probably no other jurisdiction in Canada that has undergone radical education reform like the province of Alberta. From standardized testing, dramatic cuts to the education budget, consolidation of school boards, and introduction of charter school legislation, to the adoption of parent councils and site-based management, Alberta has been the leader in Canada in changing the very face of public education. “The basis of these reforms is neither pedagogical nor fiscal, but ideological and political, consistent with ultraconservative beliefs about the role of government (as small as possible), the role of the private sector (as large as possible) and a deregulated marketplace” (Barlow, 1994, p. 219). There is also evidence of a growing crisis in public education in the province. Class sizes are growing, despite research to prove the effectiveness of the contrary,

buildings are crumbling, and decisions are being made based on financial concerns rather than sound educational practice. This increasing pressure on the system leads one to ask, what will be the future for Canadian youth and Canadian society?

Are Canadians – or the citizens of any other country – enjoying more *value* [italics mine] from their governments as politicians cut and destabilize the public sector? Most Canadians want their governments to be business friendly, but not at any cost. Indeed, even as we elect governments that would devise and implement tools of corporate control such as the Free Trade Agreement and NAFTA, we are assured that these agreements pose no threat to the public institutions Canadians value most. Culture would remain a sacred trust, the environment would never be put at risk, public services would thrive, and the social safety net would always be there to catch us. We now know that every principle, service, and institution is in peril (Robertson, 1998, p. 13).

In a world of disappearing borders, what is happening in Canadian schools is a reflection of a trend that has been embraced worldwide. This globalization, or conservative modernization, has had and will continue to have a tremendous impact on public education. It is important to be clear in defining globalization. The term can generate the image of gaining great knowledge about the planet, so that we can understand and embrace the variety of cultures that live within it. It has allowed us to see

the physical devastation of the rainforest, the people living in the barrios of Sao Paulo, the gap in the ozone layer, and the unique and important cultures of the world. It has allowed us, in the West, to live more comfortably than we ever have before.

Globalization has also allowed people from around the world to learn what it is like to live in the wealthy West. Globalization is not something that is new in the history of the planet. It has been going on for centuries.

It should be noted at the start that there is an important difference between international trade (trade between cultures and groups) and globalization. The former having been a practice since ancient days, whereas the latter, ... is a more recent and contentious development (Smith, 2000, p. 8).

Technology has provided the West with the ability to communicate more effectively and, therefore, acquire information at a tremendous rate. The *Information or Technological Revolution* is progressively blurring the lines between the private and public sectors (Courchene, 2001, p. 21). Globalization has been both an outcome and a strategy of the technological revolution. The dual nature of globalization is economic and institutional, and operates simultaneously and rapidly (Astiz et al, 2002, p. 67). Rather than providing the structure for equal distribution of resources, globalization has polarized the wealthy nations from the poor, in a dramatic fashion. According to Dale and Robertson (2002), globalization is “a complex and overlapping set of forces, operating differently, at different levels, each of which was set up intentionally, though their collective outcomes were not uniform, intended, or predicted” (p. 2). As Barnett and

Cavanaugh (1994) suggest, “The processes of global economic integration are stimulating political and social disintegration” (p. 13), whereas Joseph Stiglitz (2002), formerly of the World Bank, proposes, “Globalization itself is neither good or bad. It has the power to do enormous good ... but for many it seems closer to unmitigated disaster” (p. 20).

How then, is globalization different in the twenty-first century than it was through the ages? Clearly, this new brand of globalization has some distinct features. Kuehn (2002) suggests that there are two particular features to this current globalization: the impact of communication technology, and the neoliberal ideology (p. 1). Communication technology can be viewed mostly as a positive phenomenon. The more we are able to communicate with one another, the more effective our understanding of each other and, therefore, the better the human condition. On the other hand, this attainment of knowledge creates an imbalance that can be easily exploited, as some have access and many do not. As well, those who are aware that they have been marginalized may become dissatisfied, and seek retribution through violence.

There are a number of organizations exploring alternative solutions to the rapid move toward global conservative modernization. Each organization has differing views as to what those solutions might be and, subsequently, the debate surrounding globalization has become a complex one. Many advocates for public education have become active in their opposition to global trade agreements and, as they see it, the potential demise of public education and, essentially, democracy itself. Educational organizations such as the Canadian Teachers’ Federation (CTF), the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), and Education International (EI), which are

opposed to globalization, are not necessarily opposed to capitalism or international trade. They are more often opposed to the privatization of a public institution that offers elements of equity, citizenship, and value to the broader Canadian culture.

In Canada, these and similar educational organizations have and will continue to have a strong voice in the debate of public policy. This chapter will address the following questions:

- Do these organizations have a formal policy regarding public education?
- What do they see as *wrong* with the current trend to conservative modernization?
- How do these groups lobby for a strong public education system?
- What would they suggest, as an ideal, for public education in Canada?

#### Canadian Teachers' Federation

The Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) is a national bilingual organization for teachers, which represents approximately 240,000 teachers. The "CTF is a powerful voice for the profession and provides much needed support to its Member organizations and teachers at a time when many governments have moved ahead with very regressive education agendas" (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2003). The CTF's major areas of concern include: defending public education; promoting the teaching profession; providing support to member organizations and teachers across Canada; addressing societal issues that effect the health and well-being of children and youth in Canada and abroad; and providing assistance and support to teacher colleagues in developing countries. The CTF is a lobby group that intervenes when the interests of teachers and students are at stake. At the federal level, CTF has been active on a wide range of issues

affecting teachers specifically and public education in general including: the federal budget, the Young Offenders Act, women's issues, racism, early childhood education, official language minority education, daycare, tax reform, copyright legislation, pension reform and employment insurance. The CTF lobbies federal government departments, conducts campaigns to keep commercial interests out of schools, and fights to keep education out of international trade agreements. Additionally, it supports educators in the collective bargaining process and provides seminars and conferences to aid in the professional development of teachers (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2003).

The CTF is opposed to commercialization and privatization of the public school system. CTF policy 6.2.8 *Opposition to the Privatization of the School System* states, "The Canadian Teachers' Federation is in support of a publicly-funded education system and opposed to the privatization of the school system by the contracting out of educational services, or by any other means" (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2003). It is also in firm opposition to charter schools and to voucher education proposals. A survey of the website offers a variety of documents supporting key positions as well as a number of related links to other documents. The CTF has posted a variety of working papers and documents, offering a comprehensive exploration of its official positions.

The CTF's view on education-corporate partnerships stems from the belief that reduced funding has accounted for an increased use of curricular materials produced by corporations and a decrease in the purchase of high quality materials. With these shortfalls in funding, the CTF believes it is more likely that school boards will enter into agreements that expose children to curricular materials that support corporate interests. "The Canadian Teachers' Federation believes that materials intended for classroom use

should be subjected to rigorous evaluation... with particular attention to accuracy and completeness, objectivity, commercialism, and bias and stereotyping” (Canadian Teachers’ Federation, 2003). The general principles for education-corporate partnerships suggest that children, families and public education should be the beneficiaries when these agreements are reached; that the role of the private sector in shaping public policy should not exceed that of any other interest group; that schools and school systems should be democratically governed and receive adequate public funding; that governments should have a clear policy regarding the private sector’s involvement in education; and that any corporate donations should be distributed fairly and equitably. The CTF does not exclude the private sector from the public education system. After all, the private sector is made up of taxpayers, parents, and part of the public. It would suggest, however, that there should be some rules in place to govern private involvement in public education.

The CTF also opposes the current discussions surrounding the inclusion of public services such as education into the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) administered by the World Trade Organization.

For teachers and for public education, a change in the structure of GATS could result in privatization initiatives in many educational services, including areas such as technical and vocational education, distance education, and the education of special needs students. Teacher accreditation, testing, student exchange programs, professional development requirements, and many other

areas could be affected. (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2003)

The CTF has been active in lobbying various government officials to ensure that education remains out of the GATS agreement, monitoring the GATS agenda, and meeting regularly with Canadian governments to firmly maintain Canada's position on issues affecting public education.

#### Canadian Association of University Teachers

The conservative modernization movement has become progressively more apparent in the post-secondary sector of the education system. Increasingly, universities and colleges are experiencing under-funding, tuition increases, and a more prominent role for corporations in the financing of research projects.

The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) is the national voice for academic staff. CAUT represents 30,000 teachers, librarians, researchers and other academic professionals (Canadian Association of University Teachers, 2003). CAUT is an outspoken defender of academic freedom and lobbies in the public interest to improve the quality and accessibility of post-secondary education in Canada. Like the CTF, CAUT provides support for collective agreements and legal issues, advancing the social and economic interests of its members; provides courses, workshops and conferences; investigates threats to academic freedom; undertakes academic research, publishes reports, newsletters, books, and a monthly newspaper. (Canadian Association of University Teachers, 2003)

CAUT is a strong advocate for public post-secondary education that meets the needs of the students and the public. It pushes for public funding and policies to ensure

that universities and colleges are accessible and to safeguard the freedom to teach and conduct research unrestricted by commercial or other special interests. CAUT advances equity and human rights within the profession, fights for fair working conditions, compensation, and benefits that foster quality teaching and innovative research. As well, CAUT works for institutional governance that is publicly accountable and seeks to give the academic community its proper voice. (Canadian Association of University Teachers, 2003)

The CAUT web site offers a variety of links to other research and documents that support its position on a variety of issues related to post-secondary education. The web site offers the most recent communiqués to the media created by the CAUT in response to various government policies and agendas. One of the most recent news releases, *Federal budget fails to make the grade on education* on February 18, 2003, suggests that the federal budget is meeting with mixed reviews from the membership of CAUT. CAUT supports the projected increase in social spending but is concerned about the lack of accountability in federal transfer payments. It suggests that unless federal funds are directly placed in envelopes for specific programs including health, post-secondary education and social assistance, there are no measures in place to prevent the provinces from putting the federal money in general revenues. Also, in the same news release, CAUT expressed disappointment with the limited measures announced in the budget directed at universities and colleges. It noted that positive initiatives included the creation of the Canada Graduate Scholarship Program, an increase in funding for granting councils, and the plan to increase in funding to provide ongoing support for indirect costs of university research, but CAUT suggests the first priority should be to restore funding

to the core needs of the universities and colleges. (Canadian Association of University Teachers, 2003)

With respect to international trade agreements, CAUT is opposed to the inclusion of education in the GATS agreement. It believes, “Higher education exists to serve the public interest and is not a commodity” (Canadian Association of University Teachers, 2003). CAUT also opposes the intention of some countries, including Canada, to make commitments in the GATS only on “commercial” education services while protecting the public education system. According to CAUT, “The university associations endorsing the statement say it’s impossible to draw a neat line between public and private providers” (Canadian Association of University Teachers, 2003). “There seems to be a broad consensus emerging within our sector that bringing education into trade deals like GATS would seriously jeopardize the public mandate of universities and colleges” (Canadian Association of University Teachers, 2003). Along with other challenges surrounding GATS, remains the issue of academic freedom. Academic freedom is potentially seen by some as a commodity to be included as part of a compensation package. Booth (2000) suggests that “left unchecked, the results of GATS sessions will be the continual broadening and deepening of the influence of commercial interest on our campuses. Our teaching and research endeavors will be classified as services for trade... Diversity of approaches to program content and delivery, current resident in the university, will be a thing of the past” (p. A3).

CAUT is a strong voice for universities and colleges to remain within the public sphere. With its continual lobbying and public pressure, it is ensuring a priority for public institutions to remain public.

### Education International

Education International (EI) is a trade union organization of educational personnel that represents 26 million members from all sectors of the education industry, as well as 310 national trade unions and associations in 159 countries including Canada (Education International, 2003). It is the largest global union federation with working relationships to UNESCO, OECD, the World Health Organization, and the World Bank.

Education International aims to:

- Defend the professional and industrial rights of teachers and education personnel;
- Promote for all peoples in all nations peace, democracy, social justice and equality through the development of quality public education for all;
- Combat all forms of racism and discrimination in education and society;
- Give particular attention to developing the leadership role and involvement of women in society, in the teaching profession and in organizations of teachers and education employees;
- Ensure the rights of the most vulnerable groups such as indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, migrants and children. (Education International, 2003)

At the latest World Congress of Education International held in Jomtien, Thailand from July 25-29, 2001, a number of resolutions were passed concerning international

labour organizations, the World Trade Organization and the globalization of the economy. Resolutions adopted regarding education included; a concern for the pressures on governments to privatize education, health care and other public services; a conviction that the State's capacity to develop public services such as education should not be impeded; and a belief that the free market model, which underpins the World Trade Organization's trade liberalization program, is inappropriate for education. (Education International, 2003)

Like the Canadian Teachers' Federation and the Canadian Association of University Teachers, Education International also views the General Agreement in Trade and Services (GATS) as a serious threat to public education globally. Remarks by Mary Hatwood Futrell, the President of the Education International Roundtable in Tokyo, October 25, 1999, underscore the seriousness of public education being included in the GATS agreement. She notes, "one of the main topics on the WTO agenda is education, especially higher education and the critical role in a global society... Today, 40 countries have agreed to include education as part of their GATS agreement" (Education International, 2003). In education, commitments to GATS can be made under five sub-sectors- primary, secondary, higher, adult and other education services.

Limitations to the commitments made in education include nationality requirements, restrictions on the number of foreign teachers employed, conditions concerning the use of resources, the existence of public monopolies, subsidies to national establishments, immigration regulations, the

recognition of qualifications and resource availability.

(Education International, 2000, p. 13-14)

Education International has a wide range of concerns surrounding the GATS agreement. It believes the unplanned circumstances of world trade could seriously jeopardize publicly funded education. With GATS, there is no way to predict the future and no way to add stability to the international situation. Another concern surrounding GATS is the apparent lack of public scrutiny. Most of the organization's discussions are done secretly and the negotiations so technical that countries may agree to something that they do not fully understand. Education International feels that the protection of public services may be uncertain and is concerned that trade dominates all international discussions. These trade agreements put profit above health and education, sacrificing the social well being of the citizen to multinational corporations, profit margins and shareholders. "Multinational companies such as Nestle already send more representatives to WTO forums than most governments. The Swiss multinational Pfizer... has more staff in its marketing department than there are staff employed by the whole of the WTO" (Education International, 2000, p. 16-17). Additionally, Education International is also concerned about skill drain, as well as the reduction of working conditions and labor standards.

Education International represents international education interests at many round table discussions and international negotiations and meetings. It ensures a voice promoting public education is heard when these issues are being negotiated. In addition, it ensures that other issues, besides trade agreements, are given full consideration and debate. These include the enhancement of quality and access to education and addressing

the growing violence in schools. As Futrell (1999) observes, “As we enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century- a century which will demand more not less education- some 130 million children still have no access to primary education. The majority are girls. Another 100 million children enroll in school but do not complete the four years considered a necessary minimum to ensure permanent literacy” (Education International, 2003).

With the current trend to increasingly neoliberal trade practice and privatization of education systems, Education International believes that the very future of public education, democracy and social welfare are in serious jeopardy. Education International believes “Privatization of education is insufficient to solve the problems of illiteracy and poverty. A universal public education system can solve these and other problems which continue to plague the peoples of the world” (Education International, 2003). As should be expected, Education International focuses on global education concerns from illiteracy, to health, to poverty issues, to labor issues and many others. As Mary Hatwood Futrell states as her closing remarks,

Education International believes globalization has the potential to help the world realize the goal of democracy, of justice and freedom, of human rights for all. We believe that public education must be the foundation of any society if we are to close the gap between those who are free and those who aspire to be free; between those who are prepared for the future, more globalized society and those who are not... for these ideals to be realized globalization must be predicated on a democratic form of government

whose foundation is an educated citizenry (Education International, 2003).

Education International advocates access to public education for all and a democratic system to allow each individual in our global society the ability to reach their potential as individuals as well as to achieve the potential of the future of the global society itself. To deny the discussion and struggle is to deny humanity itself. The challenge for Education International is “ to realize [the goal of making] the world a better, safer, more inclusive, and prosperous place for all to live” (Education International, 2003).

### Conclusion

Each of the three organizations discussed in this chapter has a vested interest in the education system remaining public. All represent educators in a variety of ways including union membership, collective bargaining, and working conditions locally, nationally, and internationally. Each views public education, as a fundamental right for all people. They see the collapse of a public institution as synonymous with the collapse of democracy. Each of the organizations, the Canadian Teachers’ Federation, the Canadian Association of University Teachers, and Education International would like to see education as publicly and fully funded, and equally accessible for all children throughout the world.

Their opposition to the current conservative modernization of many democratic governments, international trade agreements and treaties, and trade organizations stems from their opposition to the privatization and commercialization of education. What they so vehemently oppose is private ownership of schools, accountability to shareholders, and profit taking from the futures of children.

They have become very wary of public-private partnerships, something being debated in Alberta, but already piloted in other jurisdictions such as Nova Scotia. They are wary of the amount of commercial involvement in the schools as exemplified by the big contracts signed with large multinationals for technology and curricular material, just so children aren't denied. They have become wary of the motivations of corporate donations labeled altruistic, as the marketing department within the organization usually makes the decisions regarding many of these donations. They have become wary that the only action surrounding reform is a move toward even more conservative modernization to which any opposition is seen as undemocratic. They worry that one side of the debate is silenced in the mass media and in society itself. They worry further that the future of our children and, indeed the future of the world is being decided in a debate over the modern conservative trend of treating children as commodities, to be bought and sold to the highest bidder. Perhaps all these worries are unfounded. Perhaps not.

## Chapter Four: Summary

### Discussion and Recommendations

The battle lines are drawn; the trumpets have sounded. Each camp, armed with propaganda and rhetoric, is waging the battle for the hearts and the minds of the Canadian public. Selective research studies and media hype, engage in the task of normalizing the untrue. Proponents on both sides “Aim to gain credibility by suggesting intellectual authority” (Saul, 1995, p. 63). Who are regular Canadian citizens to believe? Do they believe the advocates of the right wing who would suggest the Canadian public education system is inadequate, inefficient, full of bureaucracy and a drain on taxpayers’ dollars? Or, do they believe that the Canadian public education system is one of the most adaptable, diverse, democratic institutions in the country and plays an integral part in the development of the children of this nation? One side claims to be seeking the elements of choice, accountability, excellence, quality, and standards while the other side suggests that those elements already exist within the current structure. One side proposes a business model, virtually privatizing public education; the other suggests that children are not commodities, education is not a business and there are no monetary profits to be made. “Even when we hear think tanks speaking out [such as the Fraser Institute], we are not hearing thought. We are hearing rhetoric in defense of those who finance them” (Saul, 1995, p. 64).

The military metaphor presented at the beginning of this chapter offers a few clues to the depth of the ideological debate that is raging. Neither side is to be swayed; neither side can be convinced by the other’s arguments. So, as the battle is waged, the stress and uncertainty put on the public education system itself through the continuing

enactment of conservative modernization reforms, has caused increased pressure on the very system they are fighting over. “The competition for funding between schools and school programs, combined with the absence of adequate public funding, is having profound effects on the stability and sustainability of public education services” (Weiner, 2003, p. 4). This battle, as in any battle, has collateral damage. However, the collateral damage in this fight may be the future of our children, the future of the nation, and, indeed, the globe. Two opposing forces are locked in competition until one has conceded or one is determined the winner. An *us versus them* mentality has developed. Whether that is the union versus school boards, teachers versus administration, parents versus teachers, school boards versus the provinces, or parents versus the school boards unresolved conflict is dominating the scene. Why? Don’t we all have the same goal in common, to educate children for the economic and social benefit of this country? Perhaps not. As Saul (1995) says, “... time is wasted on fights between the interest groups: public versus private; regional versus national; national versus international; all blaming each other for whatever it is they say is wrong. Whatever they claim, these fights are rarely over policy” (p. 103).

So where does this conflict come from? Does it have to exist? Do we have to be so adversarial? There are a number of possibilities to counter this current trend. Some people have a Hobbesian view of human nature. They believe, because of their past experiences, that humans are generally competitive in nature. John Nash’s *game theory* would suggest this to be the case. According to the game theory, given a particular situation, people will always act in their own best interest. Economists have cultivated this idea and transferred it to economic theory to prove the existence of Adam Smith’s

*invisible hand*, although, “there is no indication that that was what Smith intended... his theory of sympathy rejected self-love as the basic motive for behavior. He also defined virtue as consisting of three elements: propriety, prudence, and benevolence” (Saul, 1995, p. 159). Are the leaders in the Chicago School of Economics so enamored of market ideology and its foundation in Adam Smith’s ideology that they are manipulating Smith’s intention? One cannot know for sure.

But there is another possibility that few are discussing in the current debate surrounding public education. What if humans were actually as cooperative in nature as they are competitive, as contrary to popular thought? Would they not achieve at least the same result for society, if not one that allowed all to benefit economically, socially and politically rather than the creation of huge divisions between the haves and the have nots? “Life ... is not a zero-sum game – that is, there does not have to be a loser for every winner” (Ridley, 1996, p. 199).

Canada was created as a cooperative endeavor. As the Europeans arrived in North America, those who settled further south were determined to conquer the land and the elements, with a strong individualist ideology. Those who settled further north were determined to survive the land and the elements. In those conditions it was necessary to work together to persist. This is very much a generalization but it does display a historical and ideological difference between Canada and the United States even though the two countries are very much linked as families and neighbours. We, as Canadians, hear the rhetoric coming out the American media and government suggesting that public schooling is in disarray and disorder and assume that the Canadian system must be in the same peril. Most Canadians, I would suggest, have not seen the inside of a school in

many years and are making assumptions based on hearsay and propaganda. Canada, as suggested above, has had its roots more in cooperation and less in open conflict. The creation of this nation has been and still is dependent on the various elements of society working together to build a country. Canadians have a fundamental belief that "... communication is more important than punishment. Covenants without swords work; swords without covenants do not" (Ridley, 1996, p. 240). Although there are regional and ethnic differences, we have the values of diversity, tolerance, and community in common. But, what if there is a more inherent nature of cooperation within human beings? Matthew Ridley (1996) would contend that humans have at their very nature the need to cooperate. "The more you behave in selfless and generous ways the more you can reap the benefits of cooperative endeavor from society" (Ridley, 1996, p. 141). We see the evidence of this in the way society itself is organized. If humans were truly competitive, we would not organize ourselves into anything larger than small family groups. Because people are basically social beings and have a need to be part of something other than themselves, societies are organized around the principles of common values and needs. What separates humans from other animals is not only our language development but also our emotion. "Our emotions are ... guarantees of our commitment" (Ridley, 1996, p. 136). Humans have a need, on an emotional level, to please and be pleased. "People care about fairness as well as self-interest" (Ridley, 1996, p. 140). If you observe children in a playground, the element of justice and fairness is apparent. Children want everyone to play by the rules and will ostracize the child who does not.

The Hobbesian view of human nature, apparent in market ideology, and possibly quite appropriate for a football field or stock exchange may not be the ideal situation for

public schools, or larger societies. There may be no other economic system at this stage in the world's development that is as efficient or effective, but to broadly stroke the ideology across all facets of social and political life is to assume that all there is to life is the making of capital. I would suggest that many in society do not determine their value or wealth simply from their paycheck. Granted, most people in Canada feel it is necessary to make enough money to support a family, and even a few luxuries, but when is enough, enough? Where our society seems confused about the importance of money however, can be seen in the following example. Society generally views those who espouse an extreme view of social Darwinism as greedy, selfish, and egocentric. As an example, complaints about high priced athletes signing multimillion-dollar contracts are escalating. None of these qualities are seen as the ultimate achievement in human character and yet they are supported through high-priced ticket sales and consumer endorsements. We want to help the less fortunate, and feel guilty for our economic success but want to cut the tax base that supports the programs that help. We have become a society that is shortsighted and easily manipulated. We have become, as Saul (1995) puts it, unconscious.

Those that proclaim that the market ideology and competition are only way to organize a social, economic or political system are missing the fact that human beings are much more social and emotional than would be necessitated in a market driven society. They miss the point that "Much of the innovation in economics of recent years has been based on the alarming discovery by economists that people are motivated by something other than self-interest" (Ridley, 1996, p. 132). Humans are cooperative as well as competitive. The suggestion that all economic and political systems should be organized along conservative modernized trends is unsettling. What is more unsettling is the fact

that discussions surrounding the new global village do not include any alternatives within the existing structures. Alternative summits are organized but those in real decision-making positions do not hear the outcomes. Debate has been virtually silenced for all those views that may run contrary to market ideology. The capitalist side won the Cold War, so there is no further need for discussion. What a myopic view of the potential of humankind!

What is needed is a focus on the *commons*. We have been so bombarded with the rhetoric and propaganda the average Canadian sees the market ideology as an inevitable outcome. “The promise - real or illusionary – of personal self fulfillment seems to leave no room for the individual as a responsible and conscious citizen” (Saul, 1995, p. 56). Disillusionment with the political system and isolation from community has created forms of apathy and disconnectedness that allow this to occur. “Why is the largest and best educated elite in history so insistent on handing the power – which we won and entrusted to them- over to an abstract, self-destructive ideology” (Saul, 1995, p. 123)? Is it that people are truly becoming unconscious to the world around them in trying to achieve a successful life or is it that they have become too busy searching for the elusive brass ring to stop and pay attention to what is happening in society. Have we truly lost our sense of *commons*? “[Modern conservatism] is not an ideology with any interest in or commitment to the shape of society or the individual as citizen. It is fixed upon a rush to use machinery- inanimate and human- while these are still at full value; before they suffer any depreciation” (Saul, 1995, p. 162).

We need to *pay attention*. We need to focus on the inherent nature of cooperation and community. The greatest achievement of humans has been the creation of societies.

In that, we have had to put the common good ahead of individual interests. It is the creation of community that has sustained civilizations. Much of what humans have achieved is through a sense of community. Great cities and civilizations have been built on this premise. “The roots of social order are in our heads, where we possess the instinctive capacities for creating not a perfectly harmonious and virtuous society, but a better one than we have at present” (Ridley, p. 264).

In seeking to save public schools from the modern conservative onslaught, it is necessary to discuss the role that public education plays in the development of a democratic, tolerant, and equitable society. Saul (2002) suggests that public education is a simile for civilized democracy, and is the foundation of any civilized society (p. 8). If the public education system is weakened by privatization, commercialization and financial cuts, so too is democracy. The strength of society rests on the strength of the public education system. There is no other institution in Canada that provides a place or community that can create and perpetuate the common values Canadians have, better than the public education system. “Public schools help to transcend our differences to see what we have in common” (Ungerleider, 2003, p. 33). Market ideology rests on the necessity of a class-based society, and yet public education sets out to achieve social equality and justice. Any child can enter a school, no matter what his or her life circumstances and will receive an equal opportunity to achieve whatever it is that he/she wishes to achieve. “The concept of an inclusive society dedicated to elimination of social inequalities distinguishes Canada from other nations, states our goal, and proclaims who we are” (Ungerleider, 2003, p. 24). In that, public education is the key.

Saul (2002) proposes that private fundraising for public schools contributes to the problem. If citizens fundraise for the basics needed to run the system, they are in effect allowing the governments to abdicate their responsibilities. “Perhaps there is a need for citizens to stand back and say to the public authorities: *It is your obligation to raise the funds and to deliver universal public education. It is not our responsibility to undermine that universality*” (Saul, 2002, p. 12).

It is necessary for citizens to debate the funding crisis of public education and hold the politicians accountable for their actions. There needs to be a loud cry that announces the benefits of a public education system to the public at large. They need to be welcomed into the schools, welcomed in the debate, convinced that the public education system offers an invaluable element to the Canadian landscape. “If our schools represent a delicate balance between serving the individual needs of students and the broader needs of the society as a whole, educational discussions must engage members of the wider community” (Ungerleider, 2003, p. 103). Taxpayers must understand that if privatization initiatives to Canadian schools proceed, their tax money is, in effect, going to private corporations, and shareholders, not to the benefit of society itself. The decisions about the direction of education policy will be made by the market and not by the communities themselves. “[Modern conservatism] destroy[s] the concept of public education as a community enterprise” (Engel, 2000, p. 69). If we lose our communities, to focus on individualism, will we not lose democracy as well?

The benefits of public education to the larger society are numerous. Not only does it fulfill the need for community, instill common values, and promote democracy, it is essential in the development of economies. Somewhere Canadians have forgotten that

there is a link between a strong public education system and a sound economy. It has been proven time and again, that an increase in number of years of schooling an individual receives, in effect, saves societies and communities in the long run.

Investments in public schooling save governments' money in the long run. Improving foundational knowledge and graduation rates reduces public expenditures in income support, health care, and criminal justice. The better educated citizen generates more wealth and their positive attitudes toward schooling (plus their taxes) can bolster support for public education. (Ungerleider, 2003, p. 290)

Indeed, the provincial and territorial governments have both a legal and a moral obligation to maintain an adequately funded public education system. At the annual CAPSLE Conference on April 27-30, 2003, Harvey Weiner, from the Canadian Teachers' Federation, outlined the civic and legal obligations of Canadian governments to support public schooling. "The threat to the future of public education can be stopped and even reversed. It simply requires a return to the basic principles and societal commitment to ensure they are respected" (Weiner, 2003, p. 1). What is necessary, then, is the social and political will to achieve adequate funding in support of public education.

Legally, Canada is a signatory for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which outlines the basic rights to education. Although it guarantees only primary education, it stipulates that every child has a right to an education, that it should be compulsory and free and provided on the basis of equal opportunity. If we continue to allow governments to abdicate their responsibility in adequately funding public

education, they could certainly be held accountable under the Convention of the Rights of the Child because what they are offering may not be described as *free*.

As well, a challenge could be waged to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms regarding minority language educational rights, including the right to receive primary and secondary school instruction in the language of the linguistic minority population of the province, and that it must be paid for out of public funds. It is necessary to recognize as well that various provincial School Acts have some provisions to protect universal public education.

Accessible, equitable, and sustainable quality public schooling for all children and youth is the key to the future social and economic wellbeing of our country. It is the best investment any society can make. Restoring our public education systems to health must be a national priority and governments at all levels held accountable to the end.

(Weiner, 2003, p. 18)

Although the legal issues could be challenged, public perception of public education must change before this could occur. Welcoming the public into schools, offering a glimpse into those hallowed halls of academia, shedding light on the true situation without it sounding like propaganda is essential. If this did not occur, public education supporters would simply look like we are whining and complaining rather than being proactive in changing what needs to be changed. Educators do not need to be perceived as simply wanting more money poured into education. They need to be accountable for taxpayers dollars.

One of the most significant problems with the public education system is the overwhelming responsibility societies are trying to place on an already beleaguered and struggling system. An old African proverb states that it takes a village to raise a child, but where is the rest of the village? Contemporary schools have picked up raising the children where there once were extended families, churches, and neighbors who looked out for one another. There is no intention here to idealize the past, as that would be naive, but the sense of community is essential for the development of individuals, economies, and nations. “We cannot prepare individuals for their unique futures, but we can prepare them for their common future as citizens” (Ungerleider, 2003, p. 11).

Public education continues to be expected to provide at least some of the elements of community that larger society has now abandoned. Funding cuts only exacerbate the situation. “The problem is that cuts can’t produce growth or prosperity or effectiveness, but cutting – a negative tool – is the natural implement of the corporatist society” (Saul, 1995, p. 108). All citizens need to make sure that the system is properly funded. As consumers, we generally expect to pay higher prices for higher quality goods. And yet, we expect to have a high quality education system at bargain basement prices. Ultimately, don’t we get what we pay for?

Cutting funding is not the solution; nor is privatization. It is necessary that we look at public education as an essential element to the construction of a democratic, tolerant, and just society. The education sector, along with the population as a whole, has grown immensely and yet funding has not kept the pace. “If growth can be conceived in a wider, more inclusive form, then it will abruptly become possible to reward those things which society finds useful” (Saul, 1995, p. 156). The face of Canada is not the same as it

was thirty or forty years ago, so why should the face of public education remain the same? “Clearly what is needed is not cutting, but the consolidation of years of incremental growth in services” (Saul, 1995, p. 109).

We need to trust that each of the stakeholders involved in public education, whether that be the government, school boards, administrators, teachers, and parents, all want the best for the future of the children and society at large. “Students, teachers, and the larger society want an education system in which everyone reaches beyond their previous boundaries in knowledge and experience. Critical ingredients in ensuring such a system are trust and mutual obligation. They are the glue that holds democratic societies together” (Ungerleider, 2003, p. 113). A key to this is transparency at all levels. True democracy is sometimes a slow and arduous process, but in the end consensus can be achieved, through communication and trust. The democratic process also allows for dynamic solutions to short term crises, but creates a vision for the long term. To date, the reforms in public education have focused only on short-term solutions. What is necessary is the discussion and debate to formulate a vision for our children for the future, where all sides are heard.

You may be for or against globalization. But at the end of the day, the ability of our young citizens to face the various effects of opening borders lies in the hands of the provincial and territorial governments. That is, it lies in their obligation to provide universal public education; to maintain the century and a half old tradition of a middle class egalitarian inclusive society (Saul, 2002, p. 14).

## Conclusion

Globalization is having a huge impact on citizens' lives throughout Canada and internationally. We have become increasingly interdependent globally as trade agreements, organizations, and governments alike, seek to advance the market ideology.

There are powerful and wealthy lobby groups that are in favor of advancing this cause and seeing it through to its embrace of all aspects of human life. We are seeing their efforts come to fruition, particularly as elements of market ideology are being pursued for public education. The elements of choice, accountability, and standards have changed the face of public education. Potentially, there are many other factors that could cause further damage. The call for vouchers, P3 schools, merit pay, and the dissolution of unions, could advance the end of the public school system. Proponents of such changes see an economic principle, market ideology, and a political principle, democracy, as one in the same. It is time to dispel this myth.

Other groups continue to advance the cause of a strongly supported and adequately publicly funded education system. They, too, lobby for their cause. They defend public education as essential for Canadian society, democracy, and economy. They argue that market principles cannot and should not be allowed to dominate the operations of the public education system. They are skeptical of reform.

What they are missing though, is that public education could and should change. The system that exists is more or less the same as it was a hundred years ago. Yes, it should be modernized. Yes, it should be democratized. Yes, it should undergo reform, but what that reform should look like, should include public support and public funding. Debate should ensue that allows all stakeholders to have a voice in what public education

should be. That is democracy. It might be awkward and it might be slow, but it is what has sustained communities and nations throughout the centuries.

It is time to create a new vision for public education in this country. A vision that is inclusive, sustainable, and dynamic to carry Canada forward through the next millennia. We owe that to those that forged this nation and to those who have yet to lay their mark on its landscape.

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